

The unpaid principal balance of an older section 202 loan would be converted to a capital advance, essentially forgiving outstanding debt. The project would then receive cost-effective operating assistance under a project rental assistance contract that is better designed to provide quality elderly housing in local markets.

In its simplest form, conversion is likely to have no financial impact on the projects, but the federal subsidy would be scored in the budget process in a different manner. By forgiving the direct loan, the need for section 8 subsidy is reduced by the amount of principal and interest. Thus, the forgiveness of outstanding section 202 loans would initially have a one-time mandatory budget cost. However, the up-front costs of conversion would, over time, be more than offset by ongoing discretionary savings and lasting benefits to HUD's budget, elderly housing sponsors, and elderly residents.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Congress has a unique opportunity to address these issues because, unlike much of the rest of the section 8 inventory, the contract renewal problem does not become significant until after the year 2000. I urge all my colleagues to join me in sponsoring this legislation.

HONORING THE SESQUICENTENNIAL OF BRIDGEPORT TOWNSHIP

HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to recognize the Sesquicentennial of Bridgeport Township, Michigan. This community was founded on April 4, 1848 and is currently Michigan's oldest charter township. In April of 1848 Bridgeport Township's population was 15, today there are 9,158 residents. Although the township has grown, Bridgeport Township has worked hard to preserve and protect its rich history. Bridgeport Township's motto is "A Community Living and Growing Together." This is a fitting motto because time and time again the residents have worked together to improve their community. When the old school house was going to be torn down—the citizens of Bridgeport Township worked together to save the historic building. Today, it stands in the township's historic village and is used by classes each year. When they needed a Gazebo constructed in the historic village, they joined as a community to complete this important project. Today, the gazebo is used for musical events and other gatherings.

John Oldham said:

To live is to meet life eager and unafraid—to refuse none of its challenges, and to evade none of its responsibilities; but to go forth daily with an adventurous heart to encounter its risks, overcome its difficulties, and seize its opportunities with both hands.

This is how the community of Bridgeport Township has met each day during the past 150 years. It is through the dedication and hard work of many generations that this community gathers to celebrate 150 years of prosperity and very special memories.

On Saturday, as the citizens of Bridgeport Township reflect on their past—they can be

very proud of how their community started and where it is today. It is a special, caring community that has grown without sacrificing their special heritage.

MCCOLLUM V. BOARD OF EDUCATION: A MILESTONE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in the case of *McCullum versus Board of Education of School District No. 71*, in which the Court clearly expressed the importance of maintaining the separation of church and state. As the Congress considers a proposed constitutional amendment which threatens that important principle, I urge every member of this House to read the Court's decision. It clearly illustrates how the separation of church and state, enshrined in the First Amendment, protects the fundamental rights of free conscience and religious liberty.

The McCollum family had a son attending the fourth grade in a public school in Champaign, Illinois. The Champaign school district allowed a local private organization, the Champaign Council on Religious Education, to send religious teachers into the public school during regular school hours. Students were released from regular classes to attend private religious instruction in the public school building.

In theory, any remaining students were required to leave their classrooms and pursue their regular studies elsewhere in the school building. In practice, James McCollum was the only student in his class who did not attend the religious instruction. He was sent to the principal's office or made to sit at the detention desk for problem students out in the hall—as though he were being punished.

The family was also subject to ostracism. They became outcasts in Champaign, and the children, particularly James, were harassed. The family cat was killed, and once, on Halloween, the family answered the door to trick-or-treaters only to be pelted with garbage. The verbal abuse grew so great that when James got to junior high, he moved to Rochester, N.Y., to live with his grandmother and go to school there. According to James, now a retired attorney, his mother worked at the University of Illinois, but when it became known that she had brought this lawsuit, she was fired.

Unfortunately, this sort of situation is far from a thing of the past. Many of my colleagues may remember the testimony of Lisa Herdahl whose family challenged prayers and religious Bible instruction in the public schools in Pontotoc County, Mississippi. The Herdahl children were harassed at school and singled out by teachers and other students. The family was subject to community protests and hostile newspaper coverage. After school officials ignored the Herdahl family's requests to put an end to the coercive practices, People for the American Way Foundation and the ACLU of Mississippi filed suit in federal court, citing the McCollum case among others. Two years ago, a federal judge ruled against the school dis-

trict, and school officials decided not to appeal.

We are often urged to blur, or even eliminate, the line that has long separated church from state. But experience shows us that when we allow this to happen, the rights of individual Americans are trampled upon by the majority. The purpose of the "wall of separation" is not to protect government from religion, as it is often alleged, but to protect religion, and particularly the individual religious beliefs of all Americans from government.

When some in the community attempt to use the power of government, in these cases against children required by law to be present in school, to further their own sectarian goals, the hand of government will inevitably be coercive. If religious freedom is to have any meaning at all, if must be that no one should ever be allowed to use the power of government to coerce another citizen, especially a vulnerable and impressionable child, on matters of faith.

Justice Hugo Black wrote in his opinion in *McCullum*, "the First Amendment rests upon the premise that both religion and government can best work to achieve their lofty aims if each is left free from the other within its respective sphere." The hard and bitter experience of families, like the McCollum family fifty years ago, and the Herdahl family in this decade, is that the authors of the First Amendment were right to keep government away from religion, the Court was right in remaining true to the principle, and it would be a terrible mistake for Congress to ignore the lessons of history and wisdom of our Bill of Rights.

Justice Felix Frankfurter, put it well in the *McCullum* case, when he wrote, "The great American principle of eternal separation . . . is one of the vital reliances of our Constitutional system for assuring unities among our people stronger than our diversities." I hope the members of this Congress will defend our national unity, the rights of all Americans, and leave the First Amendment the way it is.

INTRODUCTION OF SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BONDS LEGISLATION

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce the introduction of my legislation to assist fast-growing states to build new schools, reduce class sizes and overcrowding and foster an orderly and disciplined learning environment. I urge my colleagues to join me in signing on to this important legislation.

As the former Superintendent of North Carolina's schools, I know firsthand how important quality facilities are to our children's education. The General Accounting Office has identified more than \$112 billion in school construction needs across the country. The Secretary of Education has reported that the "Baby Boom Echo" will create an explosion of growth in the school-age populations in many states over the next ten years. Congress must assist these states to meet their school construction needs of the coming decade.

My bill will create \$7.2 billion in school construction bonds over the next ten years. The school bonds will be allocated to the states based on the growth we know they will experience in the coming decade. The Etheridge bill

will complement the Administration's \$19.4 billion school construction initiative by targeting resources to growing states. My bill is fully paid for using the offset others would use to fund the misguided Coverdell private school voucher scheme.

The simple fact of the matter is that our growing states need help to build quality schools in which to educate our children. This Congress must do its part to assist the states that have the greatest needs. My bill targets resources to the states that will experience the greatest growth over the next decade. The Etheridge bill will provide more than \$100 million each to the top 17 fastest growing states; slower growing states will qualify for lower amounts. My state of North Carolina will qualify for about \$360 million in school construction bonds under this legislation.

No child in America should be forced to attend class in a trailer, a closet or any other substandard facility. The Etheridge bill will help address this problem, and I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this bill.

IT'S OUR MONEY, NOT THEIRS!

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, processing salmon on a cannery slime line was probably the best job preparation I ever received for my stint in the U.S. Congress. Making laws is never pretty either.

Standing boot deep in fins, fish heads, and entrails, trying to keep up with the conveyor belt, my team routinely exceeded our production goals. In the end, we made a fine product, and our Alaskan employer succeeded in running a good business—despite the bloody mess.

That was my first job out of college. I paid my way through school as a lifeguard, a farm hand, a referee and umpire, a night clerk at an apartment complex, and as a retail worker. During holidays, I filled in for a vacationing heating and air contractors' assistant, and conducted public opinion polls for local governments and community boards.

Upon graduation I worked a few more jobs before being asked, at a relatively young age by local leaders, to fill a vacancy in the state Senate. In addition to the cannery job, I worked as a carpet layer, in food service, as a legislative researcher, a corporate and political speechwriter, and press secretary. I later ran my own marketing business for six years too.

But, throughout all my work, entrepreneurial and investment experiences, I've been confronted with the same disappointment—high taxes.

Each time I forked over more of my earnings to the government, I pledged to myself that, if I ever got the chance, I'd work even harder to put the priorities of wage-earners ahead of the tax collectors.

This month, millions of Coloradans will labor through the time-consuming and stressful task of preparing tax returns to answer the government's deadline of April 15th. The average family will endure a local, state, and federal tax burden of an incredible 40 percent of income for 1997.

This year, Americans will spend a combined 5½ billion hours working to comply with our tax system. Meanwhile, the 114,000 employees of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) are toiling too. They must, in order to churn out and process the 8 billion pages of forms and instructions taxpayers will need in order to stay above the law.

This is why, in my first year in Congress, I cosponsored and voted for two of the most important pieces of tax legislation in decades: The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, providing the first net tax cut in 16 years; and the IRS Restructuring Act, getting us a step closer to reining in one of the most abusive federal agencies, and setting us up to scrap the entire tax code in favor of one that is fairer, flatter, and simpler.

Indeed, this is one goal I will be pursuing further this month along with my friends at the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB)—the nation's largest small business advocate. I've been a proud NFIB member myself for many years.

On April 15th, NFIB will sponsor national "It's our Money, not THEIRS" Day. The plan is to gather one million signatures on petitions calling upon the president and Congress to "abolish the IRS Code as of December 31, 2000, and to propose to the American people for our consideration a simpler, fairer tax code which will reward work and savings."

Paying taxes is never pretty. Some would say the tax code is a bloody mess. Thanks to the NFIB, taxpayers will have a chance to send a forceful tax message to the government: "Fish or cut bait!"

To volunteer for April 15th Day, or to obtain petitions, call me, see any other NFIB small business member, or call toll free 1-888-NOT4IRS.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CHILD NUTRITION AND WIC REAUTHORIZATION AMENDMENTS OF 1998

HON. MATTHEW G. MARTINEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 1998

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Amendments of 1998 on behalf of the Administration. For the first time in nearly 20 years, the Executive Branch has transmitted to the Congress a bill to reauthorize our Child Nutrition programs and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. This legislation is cost-neutral over five years, simplifies and streamlines program operations, provide access to qualified participants, helps to ensure program integrity and improves food safety. I am happy to sponsor this bill and strongly encourage my colleagues to support it as well.

The Child Nutrition Programs and the WIC Program are absolutely critical to our Nation's future. There is no question of the need to reauthorize the expiring programs and, where we can, improve access, eliminate unnecessary paperwork, and reduce the chance for abuse. I believe the Administration bill moves us toward these goals and is an excellent starting point as we begin our efforts to reauthorize these programs.

Among the many improvements in the legislation, the bill would:

Give authority for an after school program in the Child and Adult Care Food Program for at risk youths between the ages of 12-18; this is a critical provision as so many children need a positive and supportive after school option since the highest instances of juvenile crime occur during the hours immediately following the end of the school day and the dinner hour;

Require schools to make every effort to establish adequate time for kids to eat school lunches in a "child friendly" atmosphere ensuring good nutrition;

Authorize Nutrition Education and Training grants based on \$.50 per child per year with a minimum of \$75,000 per state;

Give authority for USDA to pay for the cost of removing any foods that have been found to be unhealthy or contaminated;

Require that food service operations of participating schools be inspected for health and safety;

Increase the number of sites and children that can be served by non-profit sponsors in the Summer Food Service Program;

Improve management of the WIC program with changes in how states can manage "spend forward" funds and require documentation of income for WIC participants;

Tighten penalties on vendors who violate the rules for participation in the WIC program.

There are a number of other provisions in the bill that I will not discuss at this point, but are designed to improve program operations. On whole, the bill represents a balanced and thoughtful approach to improving the programs at a time when budgets are very tight and tough choices must be made about where to spend our limited resources.

There is one provision of this legislation regarding the WIC program which I cannot support and another for which the Ranking Member and I are concerned. First, the bill would require that the Secretary of Agriculture propose regulations to verify the income of WIC participants. I cannot support this provision because I believe it would drive legitimate recipients out of the program and would add to the administrative burdens on WIC clinics when it is not at all clear that much improvement in accountability would be obtained. Recent testimony before the Education and Workforce Committee reinforces my belief that this provision is not necessary and should not be included in the final bill which Congress sends to the President. Second, the bill would terminate the Secretary's authority to administer the very small segment of child nutrition programs, which certain states do not presently administer for a variety of reasons, at the USDA Regional level. The Ranking Member and I are committed to closely examining this proposal as we proceed through the reauthorization process and ensure that, if enacted, it will not jeopardize the nutritional meals and snacks which children presently receive under these programs.

I am looking forward to working with the Department of Agriculture, and Under Secretary Shirley Watkins, and my colleagues here in the Congress to enact the positive features of this legislation and other beneficial provisions as we work to improve our child nutrition programs through this reauthorization.